

News From...



The Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness

Chairman Dan Burton (R ~ IN)

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CHAIRMAN BURTON TO EXAMINE HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES IN U.S. PACIFIC ISLAND TERRITORIES

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN-5), Chairman of the U.S. House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, will hold an oversight hearing to examine the current status of health care services and facilities throughout the U.S. Pacific Island Territories – Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Additionally, the Subcommittee will discuss possible solutions that the Federal government may offer in order to alleviate some of the health burdens facing these citizens.

The Subcommittee hearing entitled, ***“Investigations Into Health Care Disparities In The United States Pacific Island Territories,”*** will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2004, in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building at 2:00 p.m.

“The U.S. medical system prides itself on the quality of health care it provides for millions of Americans,” said Burton. “Unfortunately, there are several populations of underserved American citizens and nationals who do not have the same access to adequate and proper medical services.”

One of the primary health concerns encountered by these territories is the skyrocketing rate of diabetes. In recent years, the incidences of Type-2 Diabetes, formerly known as Adult-Onset Diabetes, has reached epidemic proportions on the Pacific Islands. Hundreds of these patients require constant medical attention to survive, mainly in the form of regular dialysis treatments. Unfortunately, the territories are ill equipped to effectively deal with the ever-increasing demand for dialysis machines and the trained technicians needed to operate them. This has resulted in long waiting lists and late night appointments for people in need of immediate life-saving medical care. In fact, Guam, the largest of the territories, has only one civilian hospital that provides service to the nearly 170,000 citizens of the region, as well as thousands of patients from neighboring islands.

Concluded Burton, “Late last year, I had the opportunity to visit both Guam and the CNMI, where I witnessed first-hand the deteriorating health care conditions. Needless to say, I was extremely

surprised and disappointed by the lack of sufficient medical resources on these islands. I believe that as Americans we have the best quality of life in the world, and I am confident that we can work to ensure that all U.S. citizens and nationals are afforded access to high quality health care.”

PANEL ONE WITNESSES:

The Honorable David Cohen

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Insular Affairs
U.S. Department of Interior

The Honorable Dr. Nathan Stinson, Jr., MD., Ph.D., M.P.H.

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Minority Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

PANEL TWO WITNESSES:

The Honorable Felix Camacho

Governor, Guam

The Honorable Juan Babauta

Governor, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands

The Honorable Togiola Tulafono

Governor, American Samoa

Dr. Jefferson Benjamin

Secretary of Health, Federated States of Micronesia
Pacific Island Health Officers Association

This is the Subcommittee’s first hearing regarding this issue. For more information, or to look at hearing resource materials, please visit the Subcommittee’ website at www.reform.house.gov/WHR.

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